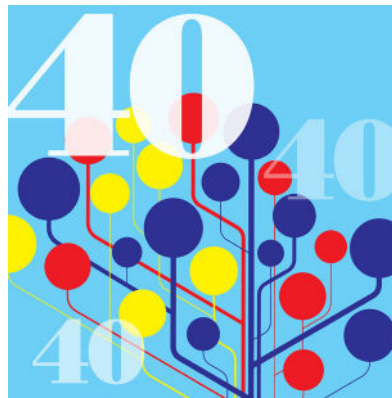




40 Ways to Make Networking Work



BY MERRILYN ASTIN TARLTON Every lawyer needs a good network. With fellow lawyers, yes. But you need lots of other people in your network as well. And not just because it's a source of good new business. Smart lawyers draw on (and give back to) their networks for ideas, introductions, information, collaboration and plenty of other things critical to a healthy law practice. Unfortunately, the oft-used term “networking” has become a mere buzzword — intimidating to the uninitiated and off-putting to many.

Networking Is About Nurturing Relationships

So let's adjust that attitude with a collection of important tips and definitions to guide you in the earnest creation of your own network. A network that works for everyone involved — not just for you.

1. Pretending to like people you really can't stand on the off chance they will hire you is just bad form.
2. You aren't going to be able to build a network without leaving the safety of your office and home.
3. You already have a network — you probably just don't think of it that way.
4. It is virtually impossible to build relationships with new people if you don't carry something like a business card that you can easily share.
5. You need a good elevator speech. Make it memorable.
6. Never expect to receive before you give.
7. You are here to help others — not to sell things to them.
8. To truly hear what someone needs, you must be a good and conscientious listener.
9. Be the host of the conversation. Make them comfortable. Make things go well for them.



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10. Ask questions. Be genuinely interested. How else will you learn about a new person?
11. You can meet people you want to add to your network anywhere. Anywhere.
12. Most people think “marketing” when they think “networking.” But building relationships with people is good for far more than just business development — although it doesn’t hurt that, either.
13. You need a good handshake. Make sure your forearm is roughly parallel to the floor, grip firmly (don’t squeeze) and pump once ... okay, maybe twice.
14. Ask — don’t tell.
15. While social media and email can be used to make new connections, they are best used to keep existing ones alive.
16. Successful networking is a habit.
17. Anyone will feel good about a conversation with you if you express interest in them. No need to flatter, just be interested.
18. Smart networkers keep track of new information about people they know — what they do, who they know, birthdays, vacations. It improves your ability to help them.
19. Smile.
20. Hiring you will rarely be the answer to the problems of people in your network. But by providing answers — an introduction, a referral, information, new perspective, an invitation, a tip — you can demonstrate that you are a source of useful answers and that you want to help.
21. You can’t attend every single networking event that might present opportunities. Develop your own criteria for selection — will your clients attend? Does it relate to your practice focus? Has someone with clout offered to make introductions?
22. You never know who will end up changing your world.
23. A glass of soda water with lemon serves the same purpose as a cocktail while allowing you to keep your edge.
24. Don’t just introduce yourself. Introduce people to each other. (This is your chance to brag on someone!)
25. It is smart to organize for networking: database, address list, thank-you reminders, holiday card ticklers and so on.



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26. Even if you are wearing a name badge, say your name out loud when you meet a new person. Some people remember what they read. Some remember what they hear.
27. Wear your name badge on the same side as your handshake hand — that way their eyes will rest easily on the badge.
28. If you read something online that reminds you of someone in your network, copy the URL and email it to them with a note. At a loss for words? Try "This made me think of you!"
29. Steer away from topics of conversation that others may find controversial — religion, sex, politics — unless you already know you come down on the same side.
30. Either manage what you post on social media in such a way that you avoid offending or get really, really good at setting (and minding) your privacy settings.
31. If it's an event where they're serving hors d'oeuvres, eat before you go. Then your hands will be free for shaking instead of snacking.
32. Learn to tell a good story.
33. Help others achieve their goals. Say thank you when they help you reach yours.
34. When out in public, carry your business cards in your right pocket. When presented with someone else's card, place it in your left pocket. That way you'll never get confused.
35. It's easy to initiate a business card exchange: "Have you got a card? I'd like to follow up on this conversation later."
36. Take care not to spread rumors — you never know who knows the person you may be gossiping about.
37. Great networks don't happen by accident. Plan.
38. Body language speaks volumes. Keep your hands out of your pockets and don't fold your arms when you're socializing.
39. Keep secrets to yourself.
40. Be nice.

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